

# STATE OF IOWA

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#### IOWA SCHOOL INDICATORS RELEASED

(DES MOINES, IOWA) — August 29, 2005 — Results from 2004-05 state assessments show that nearly 94 percent of Iowa schools and about 96 percent of districts met or exceeded student achievement GOALS, according to data released today in the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) state report card<sup>1</sup> by the state Department of Education. These annual goals are established by the state in compliance with the federal NCLB law. Districts and schools showed similarly strong results on a variety of other quality indicators, including:

- Average daily attendance rate;
- Average graduation rate;
- The number of highly qualified teachers; and
- School safety records.

The indicators, which contribute to the state's reporting requirements for the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, are used by educators as well as parents to help evaluate school programs and effectiveness.

"Schools and educators have made great strides in increasing student achievement," said Iowa Department of Education Director Judy Jeffrey. "Nearly all groups of students in elementary and middle school showed greater rates of proficiency in both math and reading."

Jeffrey noted, however, that proficiency rates did not improve for most groups of high school students, and emphasized her earlier call for schools to increase the quality of their high school curriculum. "When we combine the lack of progress on these assessments with the lack of progress on other tests and measurements, we must recognize the need for immediate and strong high school reforms by local officials," she said.

Highlights of the NCLB Annual Report include:

## **Achievement Objectives: Student Proficiency**<sup>2</sup>

While 1,438 (93.9 percent) of the state's 1,532 schools and 353 (96.2 percent) of 367 districts in 2004-05 met or exceeded federal requirements, 94 buildings, and 14 districts did not meet their goals for two

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> The entire NCLB state report card can be found at <u>www.state.ia.us/educate</u>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Detailed achievement targets and proficiency rates can be found on page 3 of the report card listed at Footnote 1.

consecutive years and have been designated as Schools in Need of Assistance (SINA). In the prior reporting period, the 2002-2004 biennium, 66 schools and nine districts received the SINA designation.

Proficiency achievement targets for grades 4, 8 and 11 and subject areas are set annually by the state and are increased at three-year intervals to ensure all schools reach 100 percent student proficiency in reading and math by the 2013-14 school year. Proficiency is measured using the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS, for elementary and middle schoolers) and Iowa Tests of Educational Development (ITED, for high schoolers). Although most schools administer the tests to multiple grades, only 4<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 11<sup>th</sup> grade results are used for NCLB annual goals.

Schools and districts receive the federal SINA designation if they do not reach the state achievement targets (including minimum proficiency rates, minimum average daily attendance, or minimum graduation rate) or had less than 95 percent participation in the testing for two consecutive years. SINA schools that receive federal Title I funds are subject to sanctions mandated by the NCLB law. Those sanctions will apply to 12 schools on Iowa's list; the state has a total of 687 Title I schools.

The increase in the number of federal SINA designations was expected because the state increased the minimum proficiency targets that schools had to meet, Jeffrey said. The targets must be met by every school that has at least 30 students within a subgroup (Black, Hispanic, Asian, White, low-income, English Language Learners, and Special Education). When a school misses a target for even one subgroup at each of the tested grades, it is placed on the SINA list. Once a school is listed as SINA, it must show it has met achievement targets for two consecutive years before it can be removed from the list.

Each SINA Title I school must follow specified sanctions according to NCLB:

- They must prepare a school improvement plan within 90 days of the designation.
- Level I schools (those on the SINA list for the first time) must offer their families the option to transfer to another school within the district that is not on the SINA list. Iowa has nine Level I schools.
- Level II schools (those that did not make goals for a second year) must offer the transfer option plus supplemental education services such as tutoring. Iowa has three Level II schools.
- Level III and IV schools must submit corrective action plans or consider restructuring. Iowa has no Level III or IV schools.
- Each of these schools also receives assistance from a statewide support team whose activities and interventions have been structured by the state Department of Education. In-depth assistance to the schools is provided by regional Area Education Agency (AEA) staff.

Districts are placed on the SINA list if all the tested grades missed their proficiency targets in a single subject area, or if they missed the minimum goals for graduation rate, average daily attendance, or participation in testing. Because all districts receive federal Title I finds, all are sanctioned by requiring them to prepare a district-wide improvement plan.

Jeffrey pointed out that all SINA schools, even the vast majority that don't fall under the federal sanctions, will be required to implement improvement goals and strategies. "Iowa is fortunate that our school improvement efforts, which began in the late 1990s, put in place formal assessment standards and required reporting to the community," she said. "We have established programs and practices to provide early intervention to schools and to assure our teachers get the professional development they need to match their instructional methods to the changing needs of students."

The SINA statewide support team has proved to be a successful intervention that can provide additional resources and staff expertise to schools and districts needing assistance. Three of the schools on last year's list of 66 are not on the SINA list this year. Of the 63 that remained on the list, 35 showed improvement in at least one area (schools need to show two consecutive years of improvement to be removed from the list). Thirty-one schools are new to the list.

## Average Daily Attendance and Graduation Rate<sup>3</sup>

While the average daily attendance of K-8 students increased slightly to 95.9 percent, the average graduation rate declined slightly from 90.4 to 89.8 percent.

These are separate but contributing achievement indicators that schools and districts use to gauge and improve student achievement, said Pam Pfitzenmaier, administrator for the state's early childhood, elementary and secondary education programs. "Iowa generally has relatively strong attendance and graduation rates," she said. "District and building administrators are trained to look past the averages and evaluate their schools based on level of improvement -- not just in the overall numbers, but in the rates for each group of students. These indicators are another way beyond testing for us to measure how much progress we are making in closing achievement gaps."

## Iowa teachers "highly qualified"4

Iowa continues to assure high quality teachers to students in districts of all sizes, which also is an important indicator of school quality, Jeffrey said.

Iowa requires that all teachers hold a valid teaching license and are properly assigned and endorsed to teach in the academic areas as defined by NCLB. Jeffrey cited the state's rigorous teacher preparation and licensure, high teacher standards, and mandatory two-year mentoring and induction for beginning teachers as additional supports that assure teachers are highly qualified.

## Safe Schools<sup>5</sup>

All Iowa schools met overall safety requirements for the school year, with no schools placed on the federal NCLB "persistently dangerous" list. A persistently dangerous school is one that has violence-related, long-term suspensions or expulsions for more than 1 percent of the student population. Districts with unsafe schools receive a warning from the Department of Education, and must offer a school choice option.

#### **Summary**

Statewide summary results are helpful to set benchmarks and identify trends, Jeffrey noted, but they cannot adequately diagnose specific learning needs or solutions, nor provide a complete profile of a district's or school's quality. The Department has developed a "Parents Need to Know" checklist to help

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Average daily attendance details can be found on page 43 of the state report card referenced in Footnote 1. Graduation rate details can be found on page 39.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Highly qualified teacher information can be found at <a href="http://www.state.ia.us/educate/ecese/nclb/documents.html">http://www.state.ia.us/educate/ecese/nclb/documents.html</a> and detailed information is available on page 45 of the state report card.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Persistently dangerous schools information can be found at http://www.state.ia.us/educate/ecese/nclb/legis/chapter11.doc.

parents understand the wide range of factors they should know and use to evaluate the quality of their child's school and learning environment.<sup>6</sup>

"Iowa has a long tradition of above average achievement overall, but that does not mean we can rest on our past success," Jeffrey said. "Jobs of today and tomorrow and our democracy require highly skilled and thoughtful adults. Achievement gaps and the stagnant high school scores must be addressed."

## SCHOOL SUMMARY<sup>7</sup>

1,532			
1,532			
1,532			
1,438			
94	7		
	•	FEDERAL STATUS	STATE STATUS
-	• 82 are not federal Title I schools	No federal sanctions.	Must meet state mandated school improvement guidelines.
	• 12 are federal Title I schools	Subject to federal sanctions.	Must meet state mandated school improvement guidelines.
		• 9 face Level I sanctions (school transfer option).	
		· 3 face Level II sanctions (transfer option plus supplemental education services).	
	1,532 1,532 1,438	1,532  1,438  94  • 82 are not federal Title I schools  • 12 are federal	1,532  1,438  94  • 82 are not federal Title I schools  • 12 are federal Title I schools  • 12 are federal Subject to federal sanctions.  • 9 face Level I sanctions (school transfer option).  • 3 face Level II sanctions (transfer option) plus supplemental education

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> The Parents Need to Know checklist can be found at <a href="www.state.ia.us/educate">www.state.ia.us/educate</a>.

<sup>7</sup> A complete list of schools and districts in need of assistance can be found on page 47 of the state report card.